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SUBJECT: UN-ECOWAS SSR TEAM BEGINS TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

REF: CONAKRY 00039

1. (U) SUMMARY: A joint UN-ECOWAS SSR team arrived in Conakry on Monday, February 1. On Thursday, February 4, EmbOffs discussed the UN-ECOWAS Mission with members of its team in order to determine the mandate and scope of their visit. According to its team members, the SSR team is planning to pursue a three month study during which they will consult key members of the international community and Guinean security forces to identify the most important components for security sector reform. After three months, the Mission will implement long term (3-5 year) programming to restructure and reform Guinean security forces. The team is not authorized to send in an interpositional force or an observer team to what they refer to as the "post-authoritarian" Guinea. According to the delegation and ICG member ambassadors, neither the UN nor ECOWAS will send a force, apart from the seven person technical SSR team, to Guinea. END SUMMARY.

THE PLAN AND MANDATE

2. (U) An UN-ECOWAS Security Sector Reform (SSR) team, led by Lamine Cisse, former Senegalese Interior Minister and Officer-in Charge of United National office for West Africa, arrived in Conakry on February 1. The seven person delegation consisted of Nicolas Guinard (SRSG Advisor for UNOWA), General Ali Traore (Coordinator of the ECOWAS delegation), Gunnar Jerkemeir (Representative for UNDP/BCPR), Amadou Mahmane Ousmane (SSR expert), Boubacar N'Diaye (Expert RS), Roger Sawadgo (ADC/Special Representative to Guinea), and Samson Azolima Ouedraogoo (Advisor for Foreign Affairs to MAECR). The technical team, which will be assessing the security situation for the next three months, attended an event with Emboffs at the Ambassador's residence on February 4 and discussed their SSR plan extensively, highlighting that ECOWAS will not deploy an observer or interpositional force to Guinea. Despite the expectations raised by the Rabat Agreement, the team is neither led or populated by Moroccan personnel.

3. (U) According to the technical team members, ECOWAS and the UN will work to create a technical plan for SSR. The group will be tracking all elements of the security sector including police, gendarme, and the military. This first visit to Conakry is intended as an introduction to the international community and the Guinean armed forces in order to generally outline a plan for security reform. After three weeks, the team will submit their outline to Guinean authorities for preliminary approval and leave the country for one week.

¶4. (U) After the first review, the group intends to return to Guinea for another three week period in which they will begin their comprehensive technical assessment for a SSR strategy. At the end of these three weeks, the group will formally submit the first draft of their comprehensive plan to the Guinean authorities, who will review the document for one week.

¶5. (U) After a second review, the team will again return to Guinea for three weeks to negotiate a final proposal with interested parties, after which they will submit their final proposal to the GOG and begin the implementation phase. While the team does not have a comprehensive plan organized yet, they envision that the SSR program will last 3-5 years.

¶6. (U) The team has not officially received an invitation or a formally written mandate from the government, but were apparently invited to Guinea personally by the GOG. According to the team, an official written invite from the GOG will be forthcoming.

¶7. (U) During the technical assessment period, the mission will only engage in "emergency" programming that is "non-controversial, low-profile, and requires minimal personnel," such as small-scale human rights sensitization activities. The group will not send a military force to Guinea and will not provide any direct short-term assistance to Presidential security forces.

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¶8. (SBU) When asked about an interpositional force, ECOWAS Ambassador Edward Aina said that ECOWAS and the UN have completely ruled out the possibility of deploying a civilian or military force to Guinea. He said that ECOWAS may consider an election observation team, but will be working with the UN on SSR efforts only through the technical assessment program. An interpositional force, he said, is out of the question. According to other team members, Guinea is now undergoing a transition period and a standing force could act to destabilize the transition process. Furthermore, they said they cannot legally deploy any sort of force in Guinea, which is deemed to be a "post-authoritarian" country vice a "post-conflict" one.

¶9. (U) In a meeting with Ambassador Moller on February 5, ICG Ambassadors verified that the UN-ECOWAS team did not intend to send an observer or interpositional force to Guinea, saying that although the question had been raised it had finally been tabled. ICG Ambassadors confirmed that both the UN and ECOWAS may send a civilian election observer mission to Guinea during the national election period next June or July.

COMMENT

¶10. (U) The delegation made it very clear that they are not considering sending in an interpositional force to Guinea. In fact, they argued that an ECOWAS force could act to destabilize the civilian-led transition. With a long-term approach, the mission believes that significant improvements in the Guinean security forces are possible, and that this will lead to greatly increased security and stability in Guinea. However, the group does not plan to engage in large-scale SSR activity during the first few months of the transition.
Moller